

Reflections 80



REFLECTIONS

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HOME ON THE RUN

It was the head so humbly laid
upon the paws crossed, nearly
dainty in their precision, guts
in splayed glory, which made me slow
the car to gaze foresquare.

He must have emerged on the run
and crossing from the trees thrown to men
the burden of canine survival, loaping
home for food or the comfort of a warm corner
and an ear scratched or even a beating
for such wayward transgression, but home.

In the thick dark
the glint of eye then sudden yelp
on impact would be no more than proof
that forest had once again been thwarted
by four cylinders and Japanese ingenuity.
Later, someone with shovel will bury what remains.

For now we each must swerve around what headlights reveal:
domestic eruption from the wild which trusted
foolishly in its own speed, forgetting ours.

HOW TO CATCH A FISH

Dangle the line coyly over all still waters.

Let your stance shift with the sun. There must be
no shadow to indicate who stands there.

The wrist alone may flick signature.

If the day is right one will kiss your hook,
rainbowing in the light, arching to your bait. Pull
the barb from the mouth cleanly then span
the body with your hands for a moment's marriage.

If the tail still swings silver
you have caught right. Scale carefully.

All hunters eat humbly
what falls into their searching hands, skill
being the rod but luck the water

full. Make the fire hot. That which comes for capture
must become flesh. Eat.

CRYING AFTER ALICE

Stopping at yesterday was fine for yesterday;
children and the whole world played, romped,
fell, cried, crawled into the cradle, and romped again
In yesterday the children pointed fingers, sneered
jeered unabashedly with companions.

Stopping at yesterday today I found that I was stopped
shocked and shook, slightly quaked
then ran, crying after Alice.
Stopping at yesterday was . . . but . . .
(to kick and to conjunctify)
and crying after Alice she never even turns.

ETUDE: APPALACHIA

This is not a barren land by any means.

No, it isn't harsh or quick. The spring and autumn are taken for granted.

The birth and death of years are long, slow, made for people with patience to share in the birth and death of years.

The young grow fat here. Flesh is part of prosperity.
And yet the old emaciate while their souls grow fat.

This is not a barren land.

It pays a price for the prosperity of its name—not often violent, crying long and slow like a well-bred child with emotion tucked deep within, behind a gentle, melancholy smile that diffuses downward slowly, carefully, so as not to hurt.

But it can hurt, softly.

Gentle touches wear slowly, indent with smooth-worn curves.

The rains touch long and deep, wash out brightness, and wash the mountains smooth.

The land laughs guardedly—in the morning, and with the evening setting-sun—sparkles, shines then; turns rich.

A long, gentle, patient laugh, more smile than sound, fading into light and darkness.

This is not a barren land, but built of soil, a place for seed, rich only in this way.

It gives a place for life, curtails extremes, and yields a verdant brown in late falls and early springs.

It tests slowly,

as carefully as the speech of those who live here, as blurred, as kindly.

Don't be too quick; the land is full of wrinkles, smooth, soft as old skin on unfragile bones.

TREE VOICES DO NOT SING

Tree voices do not sing
they often scream instead of whisper welcome words
and nights are cold when they confer.

Volkslieder are not symphonies
and only people chat
and chit inebriated utterances.

Tree voices do not sing
One even sometimes wonders if they laugh or cry
Tree voices do not sing
but spirit moves them
moves and ramples them
shakes them stiff and dry.
Tree voices do not sing
and symphonies are not song.

AS IS

For the person who waits
—not in total vanity,
nor in utter disbelief—
things keep getting better.

There are times
when one must doubt.
But only if one believes
those doubts does the
Wheel of Reality begin
to turn for naught.

As is,
I can see nothing but
a sheer, shimmering
Light ahead
guiding the Way
of our lives
and Life yet to be.

When one receives acceptance
—total, unforbearing,
uncompromising acceptance—
for himself as is,
then the Fire of Life
is kindled or re-kindled
and reality becomes
substance and sustenance.

ERAM

In a desperate attempt to gain
attention
He cried out in suicide.
I am—was. I was. I was. I was.
And then he wasn't.
His wasness was eloquent.
Those who noticed were struck
more by what wasn't than by what was.

THE HUNTER HIS PREY

We go through life like the crow flies,
Fearfully dipping in and out of scarery places
Where the hunter hides
Seeking to deceive and surprise.
Hit or miss, he has nothing to lose.
It's all just a game to him,
And our greatest distinction is that
we're his sport.

INNATE SKEPTICISM

Innate skepticism causes us to see dogmatism in the pulpit
And arrogance emanating from the professor's lecturn
As well as Wall Street controlled by greed
Which enters into and sets the tone for the
preacher and the teacher.

How **good it would** be to return to the young man
before **he went** into the forest.

The **sinner**s win, and the saints lose.

Value **standards** are overturned.

Evil rides herd on the good,

And the good gives in or doesn't know.

Chillingsworth preyed on Dimmesdale like a
leech.

Billy Budd was putty in the hands
of Claggart.

Iago completely destroyed Othello.

The devil always knows and keeps
a step ahead.

The most pragmatic politician becomes President.

He quickly sets a course and plows right through.

The political priest most often becomes Pope.

The servant leader is willing to serve quietly.

He carefully considers both sides as Hamlet did.

There is not much question about who will

have the greater opportunity to serve

Or who will eventually win the

Oscars.

The strong willed pragmatist is the
prince of this world.

One makes his own with what he has whether it be
for fun or profit.

Willy Nilly or by careful design,

When the ego rises up, modesty falls down.

Plan whatever you wish and offer whatever rewards you will.

Passion, lust, and power will rise to the top.

And the advantage always resides with whatever
is on the rise.

The promiscuous woman has it over the
lady every time

In choosing whom and what she will.

She gets the choice pickings and leaves the
lady to do the dishes.

Let whosoever will, adjust his values and make his choice.

For the time has come to choose between sitting on the top of a
crumbling structure

Or lying prone at the bottom of a sturdy house.



LONELY VICTOR

How can one man's moment
Select the words I use
Crowning me with sovereignty
Defeating other views
Some other time will come
And release me from my crown
When that man's moment
No longer is around
Who then will be the victor
And sit upon the throne
However long he rules there
He will surely rule alone.

LEAVES

Leaves . . .

in autumnal splendor
against the bleak-grey sky
promises snowy-cold weather.

Fall . . .

with their last breath
upon the grass.

VOYAGERS

Into the campground crawled the long silver trailer pulled by a pale blue Cadillac. After a few hisses and hums, it was disconnected from the car and supported by jacks; its awning stretched out to establish territorial rights, and Mr. Duncan had gotten out the barbecue grill. The Duncans were ready to relax, and Mr. Duncan began preparing to cook the hamburgers. When he took off his shirt, Herbert Duncan's white skin shone in the sun like a wrinkled hairy short-sleeved shirt against his golf-tanned arms and face. His torso had lost its battle with gravity, and all his parts were sagging earthward. Three fat pouches overlapped on each side of his rib cage, and his chest muscles hung down in little triangular points. Even the bristly white chest hairs groped toward his bloated stomach like thin mocking fingers. The stomach rolled outward immediately beneath his flabby little breasts, the smooth skin taut and white with tiny, fine purple map lines running down into his belt from the strain of holding his intestines in place. The whole mass rested upon his belted shorts from which protruded thin, pale, hairy pipe-cleaner legs in nylon socks and white slippers. Occasionally, Mr. Duncan touched the top of his head, where five or six clumps of pale hair lay folded over his bald speckled dome. Mr. Duncan's facial skin was sagging downward too, but his Polydent white teeth, rigid sharp chin, and bristle-filled nose gave his brown face authority as he removed his glasses to wipe off the sweat running under his eyes. And in his eyes there was the look of a tiny brown rabbit caught in a big inescapable trap which somebody else had constructed.

Mrs. Duncan stood outside the trailer door, sweeping the floor-mat with restrained precision. Though the wind was blowing, her rigid, steel-blue hair remained in position, puffy and perfect with three deep waves across the head locking each hair into the pattern of short perfect curls . . . When Mrs. Duncan straightened up, her stomach remained in bentover position, surging outward like a soft little tumor beneath polyester pants which hung loosely over her flat hips. Beneath her wrinkled elbows, her arms were thin and brown, but the flab of her white upper arms quivered with every move. The veins stood out of her long, brown-splotched hands which were meshed with loose skin folds, and her red fingernail polish matched the flaming lipstick with which she had created

more mouth than was actually there. Peach colored powder clung to her fine black mustache, and tiny red lipstick lines bristled into the wrinkles made from years of habitual tightened lips. Though her nose was long and hooked, Mrs. Duncan's fuzzy bagged cheeks glowed youthful Avon pink, and her thin arched eyebrows were supplemented by a long brown line, barely visible over metallic trimmed glasses. Her shrunken yellow-green eyes looked at Mr. Duncan like a bored cat looks at a mouse it has played with for some time and not yet killed.

When Mrs. Duncan finished sweeping, she walked over to chat with her neighbor while Herbert cooked the hamburgers; he always liked to do the grill cooking, and she let him have his way.

"Well, this certainly is a nice quiet place," she whined. "You folks come here very often?"

"Two or three weekends every summer," the young woman answered as she beat the cabbage grater against the table and reached for the vinegar.

"Well, Herbert and I've not been here before. We're sort of new at this. Herbert always said we'd travel when he retired, so last October we got the Airstream. Herbert wouldn't get one before because he said he wouldn't have time to use it." Mrs. Duncan's voice was in gear and humming smoothly along. "He hadn't even had a vacation the last four years. But we're using it now. Course it has all the comforts, as they say. But I just can't get used to them beds. Why there ain't six inches of space between my bed and Herbert's, and he snores like sawing logs."

"It looks pretty roomy to me," the woman replied in her courtesy voice which then rose high and tight. "Ricky, you get off that bicycle and come set the table. Your daddy'll be back any minute now. And go tell Linda to come help, right now!"

"My grandchildren are like that. Just full of energy. My daughter lives on the West coast, so we don't see her children much, but my son's little boys just love to stay with us. Last month we took them to that amusement park in Virginia with all the rides." She stopped for breath as the young woman yanked the scorched chili off the fire. "My son and his wife like to stay with us too when they can. We're taking them to Williamsburg Labor Day."

"That'll be nice," the young woman responded with ritual politeness as she dumped fat pink weiners into a pot, adding with sudden passion, "Linda if you don't get that dog out of my way, I'll scream. Where is your father?"

"Course we like to go to the beach. We had a big Airstream owners' jamboree last month. Lord, you never seen so many Airstreams parked in rows in your life. We had the best time—your buns are burning—with all them other couples to talk to. And that campground just had everything you could want. You ought to go there some time. Course they don't allow children because of the noise. Some of the older folks just can't take it," Mrs. Duncan explained, glancing at the baby gurgling in the playpen.

"Herbert likes to play golf down there. I sure am glad cause it gets him out of my hair and I can clean up the place. There ain't hardly room to turn around when he's in there. And I've always just loved to sit and read . . . I bet you I've read twenty-five of them Harlequin romances since Christmas. Course we don't get in the water much anymore though. Lord, we used to just ride them waves together hours on end, but I got a pinched nerve, and the doctor said it might act up again sometime, so I'm afraid to take any chances. And Herbert's blood pressure makes him a little dizzy sometimes, so he rents one of them golf carts and makes it easy on himself instead of maybe having a heart attack or something. The beach is about our favorite place to camp; we like to be around lots of people, too, and you're always close to somebody at the campground."

Yanking the baby out of its pen, the young woman screamed, "How did she get that nasty stick in her playpen? Spit it out!" she yelled, gouging her fingers into the child's mouth.

"I declare, I can't keep my hair looking like anything," Mrs. Duncan lamented. "Since we've been traveling so much I can't get home to let Violet fix it every week, and it just worries me to death."

"It looks just fine. Come on and wash your hands, kids. We just won't wait any longer for your daddy."

"She knows my hair better than anybody. I keep telling Herbert we'll have to go home so she can get it back in shape. Well, I see he's got supper about ready. I guess the least I can do is go eat. You have a nice vacation." And Mrs. Duncan minced away.

Herbert Duncan went inside his carpeted shell to wash the charcoal from his hands before eating. As he entered, the silver gleam of his trailer filled him with joy. He admired the rounded, riveted, edges, the deep green windows, and the large blue letters seared into the side, proclaiming his success wherever his wheels rolled. But most of all, he thought, he loved his control panel. Tucking in his blue-splashed shirt, he stood in reverence before the neat plastic knobs. He loved the hum of the little machines as they yielded to

his fingered commands. One punch, and the jacks had raised the front end of the trailer to a more comfortable level; one punch, and Henry Mancini's soothing strands lapped softly round his ears; one punch, and his T.V. antenna was ready for Rockford; one more punch, and his flagpole, his favorite, most extravagant accessory, would rise firm and tall into the sky. But then his fingers paused an inch from the button. Gladys wouldn't like that; she didn't like the flagpole anyway. Besides, he had never even fastened the flag on it yet. "Tomorrow," he whispered as he closed his eyes, softly rubbing the smooth round knob, "I'll raise it anyway, even if she does say it's going to rain." Buttoning his last shirt button, he stepped outside to meet his wife.

"Herbert, I've been thinking," said Mrs. Duncan as she stabbed a hamburger. "Why can't we go home for a few days next week so I can get my hair fixed? Violet's the only one that knows how to do it proper, and Lord, it looks just awful."

"Your hair looks all right, Gladys," said Herbert as he checked the angle of the awning for proper drainage.

Gladys Duncan did not answer for a minute, and when she did, it was with a voice to be listened to. "It does not look all right, Herbert. Just look at it; just look at me for a change, Herbert. I ain't had a good night's sleep in three weeks because of them beds. I run out of books to read a week ago. And I'm sick and tired of this running around not knowing where we're gonna buy groceries next. I want my house and my washing machine. I want to be where people know I'm somebody!"

"They know we're somebody, Gladys. You think a nobody'd drive a Cadillac pulling an Airstream? You're just tired, Gladys. God knows you've always got tired easy. You go on to bed and I'll clean up this mess. You'll be asleep before I get in, and you won't have to listen to me snore. And we'll go home for a couple of days next week and get your hair fixed."

Gladys was crying, her red-lined lips twisted down at the corners, showing the pink inside of her mouth. Black mascara made little ruts through the Avon cheeks, and her nose was running, washing away the peach powder from her mustache. Herbert handed her a napkin, and she tried to salvage the face he rarely saw without makeup.

"You just go on to sleep. You'll see how much better you feel tomorrow." He patted her timidly on the shoulder.

As she got up to leave, Gladys asked, "Herbie, do you really like all them people you talk to every day?"

Herbert was shocked: he hadn't been Herbie since before the children. He had become Daddy for the kids, Herbert for their later years. "They're nice people, honey," he said, "A lot like us."

After he had washed the dishes, he heard the long rumbling snores he was accustomed to hearing every night as he lay in bed. He sat in the dark with his shirt off, his T-shirt stretched over his belly, watching the lights of his control panel glowing soft blue, and drinking his beer. Suddenly he reached over and pressed the flagpole button; he heard the hiss of the flagpole as it rose tall and stiff in the night. He punched again and heard the flagpole retract. It worked smoothly and quietly at his touch: one punch, up; another punch, down. The pole moved up and down, up and down into the night.

ERECTED BY THE ALUMNI
IN MEMORY OF
PROF. J. D. HUGGINS

HE WAS THE FIRST PRINCIPAL OF THIS INSTITUTION & A HIGH
TYPE OF MODERN DEAN OF THE COLLEGE HIS RADIANT CHARACTER
AND SACRIFICIAL LIFE OF SERVICE FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
WAS AN INSPIRATION TO THOUSANDS OF BOYS AND GIRLS
HE WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR GREATNESS WITHOUT PRETENSE



THE CATS AND LARRY EDWARDS

"The Cats and Larry Edwards" was one of those shows interrupted at intervals by the vertical hold, like those stories that drift off the edge of the page onto your fingers before they ever get started. After a big meal of barbecue, I sat down in front of the television to clip my nails. When I wake up, I'm watching a test pattern, and Larry Edwards calls. He thought I'd still be up and asks if I can come in to work tomorrow. I study the table for an answer and decide to stay home because I've been seeing things all day—In the school cafeteria, I saw a lunchroom-lady, wearing clear gloves, placing sirupy pear halves on my tray, while black seals on the bulletin board balanced the children's diets and wasps hovered outside the window, trying to open it using telepathy. A kid walking through the line asked what time it was, and answered himself—"Daytime. Have you ever seen a night like this?" Larry says O.K., he understands, and hangs up, then steps out the kitchen door to break up a cat fight. I see this through the window—Larry closing his carport door on the way back inside—and on the blank television, which might as well be a jar hanging in the window at night.

One day, I may buy a remote control like those you operate without ever having to leave the car. I may be able to afford a black-and-white set, a real one, instead of ones which stains everything in a room a dolphin color, the color of the people on the screen, a blue-black patent leather.

Sometimes, I watch television like a primitive tribesman, shown a film of a firetruck by an anthropologist—not even perceiving the shape of a firetruck on the screen, though I can see insects crawling where the ladders should have been. Tonight I watched a news story about a house fire. But in "The Cats and Larry Edwards," it ran backward—the firemen carefully placed the children inside the burning building, sealed them in, and sped away. Mosquitoes, drawn to the screen, brushed lightly at the children's faces until they went back to sleep, in front of the television test pattern. And

when they woke up, they walked right up to it, unafraid, or unaware.

Allen Ginsberg has a poem called "Television Was a Baby Crawling Toward That Deathchamber," the way Larry is called outside in his underwear to find himself standing between two cats. In "The Cats and Larry Edwards," there is no story, except that Larry goes out the side door, hearing cats fighting outside. This evening, nothing happens to Larry any more unexpected, or passionate, than to the characters in the situation comedies. Larry hangs up the phone to walk outside, without hearing the canned laughter that punctuates every movement. He notices a wind on the moist lenses of his eyes as the door swings away from the house. He remembers feeling this in a city once before.

He can't say how long the cats have been there, taxidermied in place with glass eyes blank from staring, their shapes warped from trying to pull away and run. Standing between them, he folds his arms like the ladies who come out of the house only on Sundays, to survey the azaleas in the yard. The cats grow bigger in Larry Edwards's mind, from standing over the small dirt mounds decorated with leaves by his sleeping children, and Larry himself, bigger in comparison to their pie-plate lakes. His eyes dilate to match their eyes. Out of the corner of one, he sees his garage reflected in my window.

And I'm listening to the sounds cats make in my television with half-human voices, and hoping, like Larry, for some interruption, because the pace of their moans has almost reached an RPM we can understand, and Larry knows this too. They are telling a joke, in slow deliberate voices, and the punch line comes in seeing how close Larry Edwards will bend to hear it. For a second, he thinks about picking the cats up by the scruff of their necks like kittens, to hear better.

I've heard this one before, Larry, standing between two horses I was holding out at arm's length by their bits. And in their chewing and frothing, they seemed to be growing new tongues behind the old ones, for making a whole range of new noises, and ready to spill everything.

In both versions, there is the symmetry of finding one's self in the middle, at last. Larry standing between his cats and creosote trees,

and me standing between two horses. Larry thinks he'll pick them up by the necks like kittens, one for each twin arm, and place them on his shoulders. He imagines this without moving, with dotted lines for arms, like Da Vinci's drawing of the man inside the circle. Here's one way, he thinks—these headphones, to teach me how to cry again, outdoors, like babies, because of something holy in the speech of moaning cats, behind their parched lips and fish teeth—behind the muscular lips of horses, with mouths bit-jerked into involuntary smiles, exposing the teeth of an old man, relearning to talk after a stroke.

Larry can't find the proper response to this situation, to the begging of cats. Just now, he would read them the sworn statements sewn into the pockets of his suits. Larry sees his garage door reflected in my window. He thinks I must be watching television.

8 FLAMINGOS

The pope walks from left to right in the National Enquirer.
You hold a cigarette in your mouth, pretending to read
About the Sistine Chapel.
(Someone goes by in a leopard-skin dress.)

You hold a cigarette in your mouth, pretending to read
About the 8 flamingos stoned by visitors in the St. Louis Zoo.
Someone goes by in a leopard-skin dress;
Someone holds a llama by the neck.

About the 8 flamingos stoned by visitors in the St. Louis Zoo—
You notice flamingos in your own front yard,
But you don't make the connection.
Someone goes by in a leopard-skin dress.

The pope walks from left to right in the National Enquirer
But you don't make the connection
You hold a cigarette in your mouth, pretending to read.
Someone else lights the other end.

TWITCH

Because horses are afraid of electric clippers

My father makes something called a twitch

A bat with rope at one end, twisted around the nose of the horse

Which stands unable to move—like an arm twisted

Behind someone's back, its flanks mapped out in veins

Its eyes dialated like someone mule-kicked in a cartoon.

He tells me to turn the twitch a little further to the left.

He has to trim around its ears.

Then my mother takes a picture of me on the horse.

She says she will paint color into the photograph.

My mother was an art student.

Her first painting was a paint-by-number of some horses

Unflinching in a field of grass which she never finished.

She wants me to be an artist.

But when I retouch the photographs, the lips turn out bloody.

I stare at her painting for hours

Still mounted on a cardboard easel, with a photograph

Of the work in progress beside it.

In the photograph there are three horses, but in the painting,

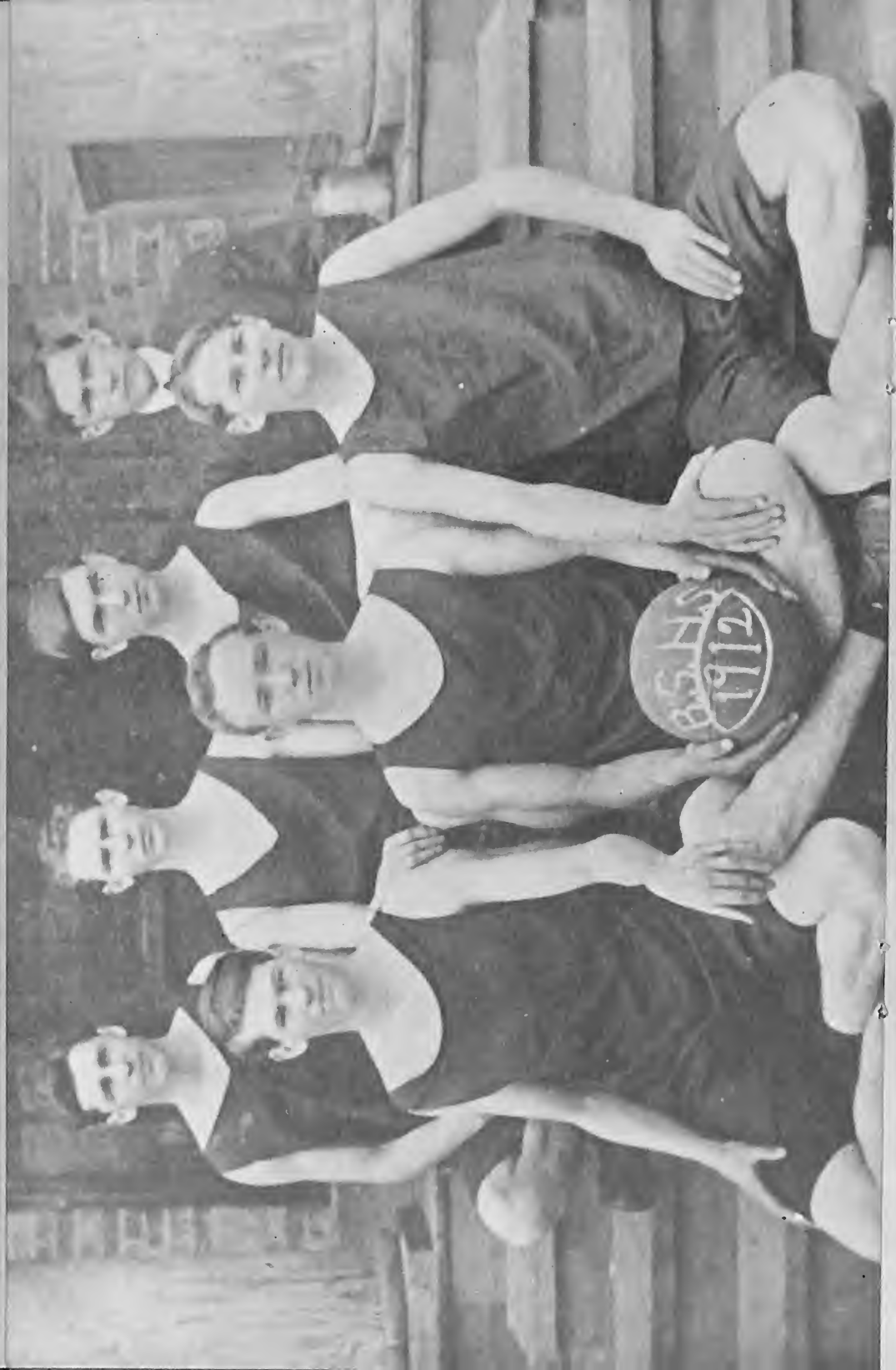
There are only two—One horse was either erased with white

Paint to confuse me or was never finished.

I try drawing the one which isn't there

with x's for eyes like hobby horses

or without the stick, hovering like carousel horses















GARDNER-WEBB COLLEGE

FOUNDED 1905

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CLASS OF 1953



or Spanish horses, painted with both legs extended
or carved into whip handles, flattened
shapes that could easily fit into a hand.

Even the stop-action photographs of the running horse
proved that all four legs could leave the ground at once.
Either way, they appear to hover for a minute
like dirigibles.
Their shadows cut holes underneath them.

Carolyn Santanella

DORIS

Nose pressed
tight against
fragile glass—
(windows of the soul)

Candy store filled
with anything
to please—
Fancy pieces to the
front.

Choose the
caramels in
back—

They last.

SWALLOWS CHORALICE

Swallows choralice
before audiences
of mellowing corn

Vocalizing sunlight
tunes to
wind instrumentals

with scrub pines
tapping toes
in rhythm

IN SAINT ANNE'S

In Saint Anne's
solitude
you walk
Candles lit
in prayer
tender heart
fills with
ease
pain will leave
with care
holy waters
trickle
peace
to the soul

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AMERICA: A RETROSPECTION

For Bill Withrow

"Here on the borders of death, life follows an amazingly simple course, it is limited to what is most necessary, all else lies buried in gloomy sleep;—in that lies our primitiveness and our survival." (Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front)

We see
the West wind blow
cold, upon the winter desert of this land
war's end
beginning

There is hunger on the mountain
Men steal
to fill the void
of our ravenous appetite

We died in Ohio,
the 37th parallel, Jonestown
protesting, protecting, looking for
the dream

Oh, let us sing America
While our prophets speak of doom
Each coming decade
Swallowed by our practiced decadence

Let us sing, America
While our prophets speak truth
We, afraid to turn back the black clock hands
of our certain prosperity.

Let us sing a moon-song
While somewhere a child is cold and hungry
Let us sing, America
While they speak
To protect our home
fragile as a glass cage
spun for a gilded bird

Let us sing, America
Our dirges.

T. M. Linnens

AT THE STABLE DOOR

We come again to peer into a stable
at a tired young mother drained by long miles
of jolting, dusty, donkey-travel
and hours of sweating, straining labor pains,
and at the proud carpenter-father
as they smile down on their new-born son,
swaddled, squalling, lying in a manger,
the rough-hewn feed-trough
where cattle crunched corn.

We are drawn here by a haunting love,
love that thrust our Lord into a human womb,
out through a human pelvis into warm arms,
to suck warm milk from human breast,
drawn by a tug much stronger than the one
that drives the moth back to the flame.

The mind is struck awake by this impact
of the awesome incarnation,
life and love divine now wrapped
in human flesh
and come to live among us.
The mind strains and stretches to grasp
that which it cannot package.

We sing our songs and write our poems,
and preach our sermons,
we paint, admire pictures of that scene,
rehearse, present rich, moving dramas
of God's thrust into our earth and hearts,
and still we hunger year by year
to stand in awe before that stable door
till something of that glory
flung to earth
breaks across our quivering soul.



GARONER-WEBB COLLEGE
1905 1943
GODS LOVE AND HIS MOUNTAIN

Shadows hidden in my mind
Conceal the secrets of my life
This existence tucked within a frame
Of bones and flesh and hair
The secrets all will not reveal.

Who knows the name?
Or who knows the pain?
Will the best be said
With this success
Or will the envy
Of the triumph
Be as waiting vultures
For the fall.

LONELY

This lonely emptiness
is felt more keenly
by the acute awareness
of this crowded room.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

Do not be misled by the turning
of pages; read from the center out.

To read as usual: assume a center
of consciousness outside the other
conscious center and chew the cabbage
leaf by leaf, worm your way in and when
you are ready bore down, see if you
can hit the center, or miss.

To read this book: find roots and
enter (better, find seeds), enter
the germinating stream, go up within,
suck juices, chew nerve centers.
You will be called maggot; you will
eat the heart out; you will shorten
your life as you know it. The plant
will seem to wither and you will

not worry: the publisher has
graciously printed enough copies
to go around, each of a different
title.

OAK GALL

I could not resist brushing away
the grit and webs
of featherweight treestump spiders,
prying the powderpost holes of beetles,
and blowing off bark bits hung
in the web lines of spider mites;

getting to the thing itself
was violation, without malice but
without forethought, caught
in midthought:

the poem is in the house
this oak gall was for mites and moss,
lichen and wind-delivered weed seeds,
tight moss clusters grey-green
and two other deeper shades
of the rambling kind;

and the poem is in the changes
air requires
along the contours of the fresh break-
point, sharpening the ridges
and hills, lifting moisture from its lakes,
brown light furrowing the deep valleys;

and I have no name for the odor of oak
this breeze is stealing from me.

UPROOT THE TREE OF LIFE

and it will bleed
on the ground;

there is

no pressure in air
sufficient to the force
of earth:

keeping the sap
flowing, budding.

GOOD TASTE

butter cream
nudges
malted milk
nougat
says, "why
gold wrapping
on the
liquid cherry"
replies, "fool candy"
as sweet monarch
says, "one with
shinnier covering
accepts
greater risk
of
discovery."

GENOCIDE OF SORT

Like to think it was
unintentional
begun by environmental causes
caused by fate
vectored hit, miss
humanly unprogrammed
ultimately controlled.
Rain, porous earth
flooded dwelling
Exposed.

They
went about their way
walking hit, miss
probably unaware
of the struggle, the plight.
Instinctual strategy employed
remained still or
s l i d e unrelentlessly
seeking sanctuary
past the cement
over victims
from sidewalk
to earth
mansion.

HOME REMEDY

Mo is it ch'yor
eyes hurt?

Mo says "yeah,
Cause life &
death &
In between
makes
pressure . . .
extreme . . .
In the eyes
A Round &
over"
He needs some gentle

Moistur--
i zer.



SEED STREET STRANGER

Lady
I whispered, can you
Help me?

Your remote head turned away
Ever so slightly . . .
Sensing my filth
Eyes closed, delivering
The blessing of blindness
The disgust was too blatant
Too brutal

Like a child
Staring after the ice cream truck,
Empty-handed,
God knows I ask for little
More than just-washed clothes

But lady—
With your dry cleaned tweeds—
Just before your head
Returned to its accustomed
Drown-likely angle

I recognized the come-on
Glimmer
Of a bus station
Hooker's eyes.

HISTORICAL HODGE-PODGE

The walls between rooms
Do not hide the fact
That Bach and Billy Joel
Do not mix.
The 10-year old violinist
Just can't compete.

Furthermore,
The clock cannot keep tempo
With either—
And those postage stamp-sized
Yard riding mowers
Do not harmonize
With the unsyncopated
Chain saws out back.

Looking down, I see
That nine of my fingernails
Are longer than the tenth.
But the difference
In finger and toe nailpolish
Is decidedly unmatched.

Frankly,
I have reached the conclusion—
And will punch anyone
Who disagrees—
That Hitler listened
To one clock too many
Trying desperately
To tock to Bach.

THE SHAME OF OLD AGE

Ripples from hair root to toe nail.

Waves of flesh

Billowing

Into one another—

A corrugated face

Worse than the wrinkled hair.

Old woman pushing sixty

Playing twenty:

Drape the bulge

Plaster the cardboard

Bleach the mop

The mask will chip and peel

What is left will frighten

The mirrored shadow.

PICKIN'

I was pickin' on my banjo late one night
When I noticed something strange in the firelight.
Something crawled out and to my surprise,
A miniature man stood before my eyes.
He was a short ole fellow, 'bout one foot three,
And he jumped off a log and onto my knee.
He was wearin' faded levis and a cowboy hat
And high-top sneakers. (Now imagine that!)

He said, "I heard your pickin' back there in the flame
And I thought I'd hop out. Oliver's my name.
I see you're a picker, well I pick, too.
And if you'd like I'll play for you."
Well he pulled out a banjo and began to play.
He was the best darn picker I'd seen down this way!
When his fingers hit the strings, the sparks just flew.
He picked three days before he was through.
Then he sat back on my knee to take a rest.
(I was still delighted with my little guest.)
He said, "I learned to play from an old toad frog
Who lived down yonder in the Mississippi Bog.
Now I've had fun, but I've gotta go.
I hope you've enjoyed my banjo show."
He jumped back into the fire and left like he came.
I picked up my banjo but it wasn't the same.
I knew I'd never be a picker up to his par,
So now I'm back to strummin' on my ole guitar.

NARCISSUS EMBARRASSED

Pressed lips
on a mirror (steamy blur)
taste years of denial.

Two hands gingerly touch
tip to tip in harmonious pressure.
Four eyes hold the attention
so often desired.

Two bodies press closer
until only an empty room
is visible to the straying eyes
of a solitary, red-faced lover.

ROBERT'S DOWN

the hall writing
poetry in his underwear.

His favorite reading
material is a worn copy
of Genet's *Querelle*.

He likes sailor's
uniforms, French wine, and sex,
but not necessarily
in that order.

He once explained Genet's plot
to a minor and she almost had him
arrested—he loved it.

FOR DAVID IN CHICAGO

That odd sound of two feet walking
the street has a different sound,
not like feet walking together to the movies
or feet running to meet for lunch,
more like the slammed door and fastened lock
of an empty apartment.

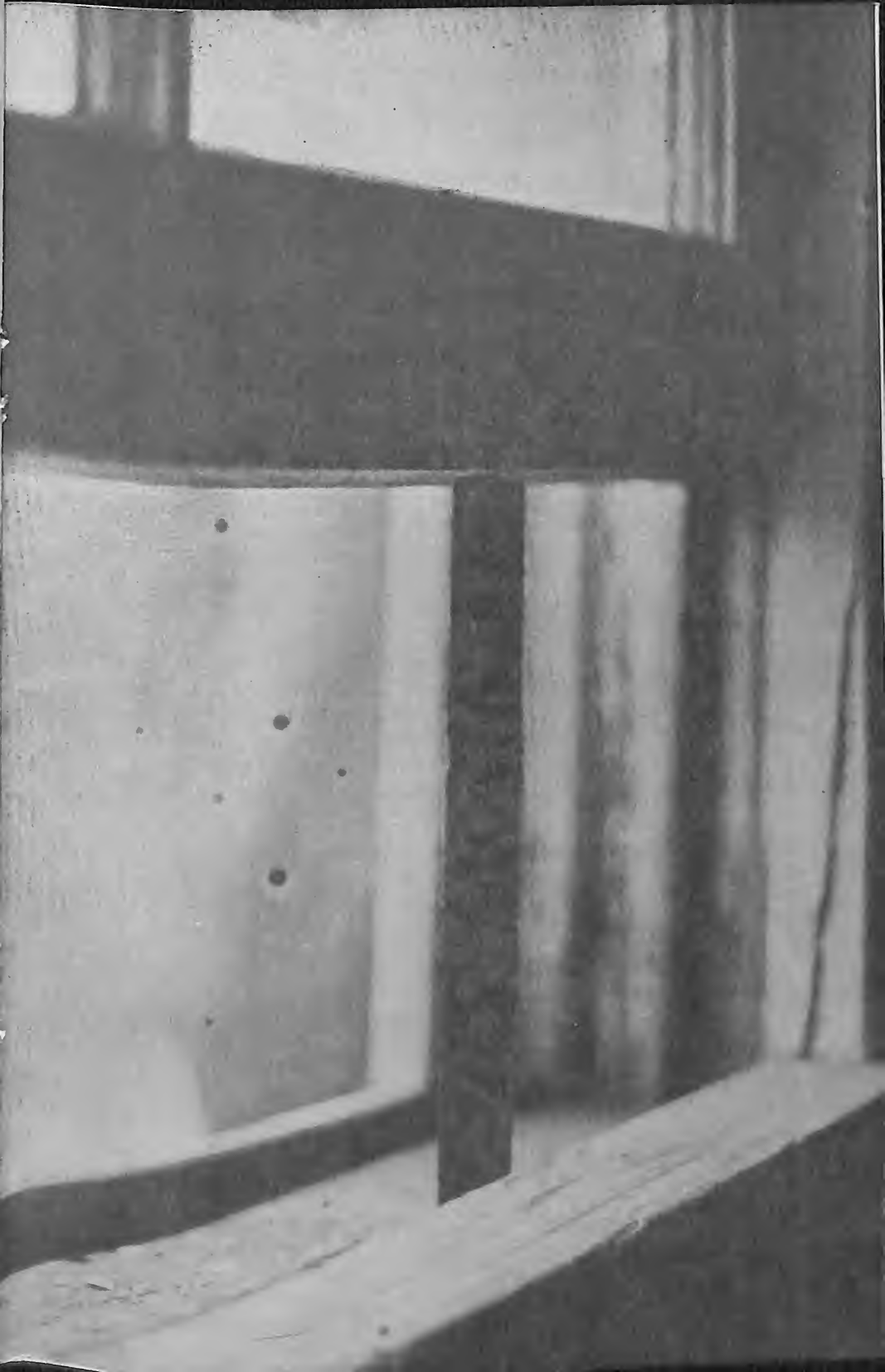
TORMENTED OR TORMENTOR?

There's a bumble bee tied to the end of my string.
I feel like a cruel child with a live toy
Watching my bee thrash against the air
Until the string is taut
Then watching him fly in all directions
Buzzing
Unaware that the string is not the tormentor
My little bee tires
As I watch
The string slackens
My string will be limp soon, lifeless.
I love my little bee, and wish I had something other than a string.

ON EMMETT KELLY'S DEATH

Little Lolita shivers in the warmth
As the spotlight commands her to perform.
The intense light is not even dimmed
By the quiet clown
Who patiently attempts to cleanse the floor
Of harsh lights and unwanted attention.
The child's simple smile
Doesn't quite reach her lips
Yet the peaceful clown is content
With his partial, though temporary, success.

Weary Willie rests now
And Lolita realizes
She, too, will find rest
Only with the darkness.



SEASONAL

I am perplexed

Shades of Brown bleed through Summer Green
Like sunrays burning through a misty fog

Once every time around, orange, red, and yellow
Splash against hillsides and seep into valleys

There has been no mention of time
Yet creatures everywhere prepare for inevitable change

The little village floods
With waves of apprehensive life
 eager to learn
 to love
 and some
 to leave

The masses become a river of ceaseless tide
Those who flow find life-giving experiences
Some resist
They perish

In the river there is food
 and poison
In the tide there is warmth
 and cold
In the flow there are helping hands
 and hindering snags

Many, those who wish
Gain strength and spirit
And swim joyously to the ocean.

In celebration of Gardner-Webb College's 75th year, the editor, advisors, and staff of this year's *Reflections* asked former editors of the magazine, Wayne Blankenship, Carolyn Santanella, and Suzette Collins Thompson, for contributions for a special section. Also included in this section is long-time friend of G-W and frequent contributor to *Reflections*, T. Max Linnens. The special section begins on page twenty-one and concludes on page thirty-two. All photographs in this section were taken from the files of various G-W publications.

The Gardner-Webb English Department sponsored a contest for the poetry and short stories chosen for publication in the 1980 *Reflections*. Judging was conducted by E.M. Blankenship, Richard McBride, Thirlen Osborne, William B. Stowe, and Jim Taylor. All works were submitted anonymously to the judges. Faculty and non-student contributions were not eligible for the contest.

Awards

1st place	Genocide of Sort	Teresa Yingling
2nd place	Robert's Down	Randy Waters
3rd place	Etude: Appalachia	Criss Nichols
Honorable Mention	Good Taste Tormented or Tormentor? For David in Chicago Historical Hodge-Podge	Teresa Yingling Lynne Becker Randy Waters Debbie Drayer

Reflections also sponsored a student contest for black-and-white photography to be published in the 1980 issue. The winning entry, by Mike Gurley, is found on page thirteen. The judge for the contest was Ms. Donna Bise of the Shelby Daily Star.

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